THE *COUNTER*FORCE

MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL REVIEWS #1

JULY/AUGUST 1982

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MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

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This issue contains 94 reviews, contributed by:

Jeff Bale
Tim Yohannan
Ruth Schwartz

THE COUNTERFORCE

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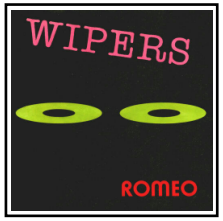
WIPERS – Romeo / No Solution 7″



This band successfully combines punk and hardrock, much like early GENERATION X and SUICIDE. Some tasty guitarwork and nice fuzz, one of the few bands to make longer songs tolerable. B-side is weak.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Trap

YOUTH BRIGADE – Possible EP

A fantastic group with a chunkier sound and a slightly slower thrash attack than MINOR THREAT. "Pay No Attention"? is an awesome musical steamroller and this EP would be perfect if they'd included the classic "I Object,"? but you can't expect everything.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Dischord

YOUTH GONE MAD – Oki Dogs EP

LA punk with female lead vocals. Stylistically, it fluctuates between modern thrash and more traditional punk. Surprisingly good for unknown band, and the song about Oki Dog—the infamous punk grazing ground—is hilarious.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: self-released

ZERO BOYS – Vicious Circle LP

The best band from Hoosier territory since the PANICS and the early GIZMOS. The ZERO BOYS have managed to combine elements from the '60s punk-STOOGES axis of their first EP (especially the great vocals) and '80s thrash without losing anything in the process. This well-recorded album is varied enough to hold the interest of punk afficiondos from all eras, no small achievement.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Nimrod

100 FLOWERS – Presence of Mind EP

I read that the URINALS decided to change their name so they could get gigs, but apparently it also signaled a change of musical direction. Only the speedy "Dyslexia"? reminds one at all of the old URINALS on this EP: the others are examples of their slower neo-psychedelic approach. Personally, I'd prefer the return of the greatest garage band in the world, but then what do I know?

Reviewer: Anonymous
Label: Happy Squid

ANTI–ESTABLISHMENT – Future Girl / No Trust 7″

Standard UK punk, slow and passionless. "Future Girl"? has a unique intro and cool '60s guitar break, but on the whole this effort isn't as strong as their *1980's* debut. The vocals sound like Gene October of Chelsea.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Glass

ANTI–NOWHERE LEAGUE – I Hate People / Let's Break the Law 7″

Reactionary bikers posing as punks put out a second heavy metal 45 as pathetic as their first. All the record industry hype and rich backers in the world won't make these do-dos popular unless punks have become as undiscriminating as conventional rock fans.
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: WXYZ

ANTI–PASTI – East to the West / Burn in Your Own Flames 7″

Another excruciatingly boring release from this overrated band. Their attack is a slow-motion one, and I can hardly stay awake till its conclusion. The wimpy pop sound on this 45 makes it even worse than their usual offerings.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Rondelet

ATTAK – Today's Generation EP

Representative English punk circa 1982, with gruff Oi-influenced vocals grafted onto a typical punk background. "No Escape"? is fucking hot, the rest merely ordinary.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: No Future

B–TEAM – First Product EP

Yes, they do have a lot of GANG OF FOUR influence, which often becomes boring. Such is the case with the two B-sides. But the A-side is blessed with a much more raw and aggressive sound—the redeeming side of "post-punk."?

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: self-released

BATTALION OF SAINTS – Fighting Boys 12″

Fast heavy metal punk with good political lyrics. The tunes are strong, but there's a bit too much lead guitar wanking for my taste, especially on "I'm Gonna Make You Scream."? Still, it's a promising debut.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Nutrons

BEAVER – Trendy EP

A new 10-song EP from the DC area. Half of it is the standard DC thrash—pretty good but not outstanding. The other half consists of short bursts of concentrated noise with a stop/start arrangement, sort of like the MINUTEMEN. Mail away for it, because you probably won't find it in the stores.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Choice Cuts

BLACK FLAG – TV Party EP

A side of BLACK FLAG's most commercial song, and features current drummer Emil. B-side's "I've Got to Run"? and "My Rules,"? sound more like the LP, with fill-in drummer Bill. Production is even cleaner though. Bring back Robo!

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: SST / Unicorn

BLACK HUMOR – Love God, Love One Another LP

These guys are some sort of SF studio concoction, and they are lunatics. They swing from music for nightmares to rhythmic jungle rock. Recommended for the flexible. Check out their individually designed sleeves and enclosed worms!

Reviewer: Ruth Schwartz
Label: Fowl

BLITZ – Never Surrender / Razors in the Night 7″

The best of the "skunk"? bands comes up with a second terrific release. On this one the guitar sound isn't *quite* as heavy and dense, but it's more than compensated for by the accelerated tempo. A must.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: No Future

CHAOS UK – Burning Britain EP

A wild thrash attack makes this one a necessity. Better than 90% of the current crop of Brit-punk. Why are there so few bands like this over there?

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Riot City

CHRON GEN – Jet Boy, Jet Girl EP

Super lame. Boring songs, weak guitar, and a general lack of imagination make this a waste of vinyl. CHRON GEN were much better on their debut EP, before they allowed themselves to be overproduced. Live and learn.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Secret

CODE OF HONOR / SICK PLEASURE – Fight or Die / Dolls Under Control split LP

Glad SICK PLEASURE bit the dust, this being a posthumous release—too heavy metal for my taste, with lyrics of equal mentality. CODE OF HONOR side is much better—still traces of metal (Mike Fox being guitarist in both bands) but the thrash cuts are tight, with interesting variations. Jonithin Christ's (ex-SOCIETY DOG) lyrics and vocals make all the difference here—he's graduated from nihilism to advocacy of peace, unity, and political action.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Subterranean

CRAP DETECTORS – Superficial World LP

Jim Jacobi, one of the American indie pioneers of the late '70s, has come up with an eclectic mixture in this new incarnation of his CRAP DETECTORS. An underlying intelligence is evident throughout this album, but the music, which ranges from garage punk to garage rock to garage reggae ("Phenomenal Technical"?), is only sporadically engaging.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Permanent Press

DA – Time Will Be Kind 12″

A marked improvement over their debut. This time around their influences—SIOUXIE, GANG OF FOUR, etc.—aren't as obvious, so if you've got a hankering for sophisticated guitar-oriented post-punk, DA is for you. "Strangers"? is an especially haunting song, and the guitar work is exquisite throughout.

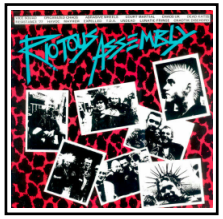
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Autumn

DEAD MAN'S SHADOW – Bomb Scare EP

This group's first EP had a certain charm that they have now replaced with a leaden sound like that of label-mates ANTI-PASTI. The result is pretty nondescript.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Rondelet

V/A – Riotous Assembly LP



Cuts by UK groups VICE SQUAD, ORGANIZED CHAOS, ABRASIVE WHEELS, COURT MARTIAL, CHAOS UK, DEAD KATSS, RESISTANCE 77, HAVOC, MAYHEM, EXPELLED, TDA, UNDEAD, LUNATIC FRINGE, CHAOTIC DISCHORD. A few previously released tracks, most not. Pretty good collection. Favorites are by HAVOC and CHAOTIC DISCHORD.

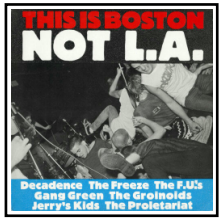
Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Riot City

V/A – Someone Got Their Head Kicked In LP

An anti-violence compilation from the kids at Better Youth Organization—the folks that put on shows at Godzillas. Features tracks from LA, Santa Barbara and San Diego bands SOCIAL DISTORTION, JONSES, Youth Brigade, AGRESSION, ADOLESCENTS, BLADES, BATTALION OF SAINTS, and BAD RELIGION. Strong album, but not as thrashed-out as one might expect—tending more toward the melodic, but still hard. Great production. Pick it up.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: BYO

V/A – This Is Boston, Not LA LP



This one's probably the best US hardcore compilation available. The material of course varies in quality, but all of it cooks. It's pretty hard to choose, but GANG GREEN has the fastest and most intense thrash attack, though JERRY'S KIDS come close. On the other hand, the PROLETARIAT and F.U.'s (especially "Preskool Dropouts"?) have the most perceptive lyrics. The FREEZE combine original music with intelligent content, and DECADENCE weigh in with a critique of mindless, ultra-violent slamming. All in all, a great introduction to Boston's finest (excepting SS DECONTROL, who don't appear here).

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Modern Method

VICE SQUAD – Stand Strong EP

A band that's really deteriorated since their first two EPs. This new one, though not as bad as its immediate predecessor, barely halts the downward spiral. Beki seems bent on taking the same route as Siouxie, and the band appears content to follow lamely along. Only "Tomorrow's Soldier"? packs a real wallop because of its straightforward nature and louder guitars.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Riot City

VIOLATORS – Gangland / The Fugitive 7″

Whether you call this slow punk or fast post-punk, it's got a certain flare. The buzzing guitars in "Fugitive"? are attention-getting, and the melody line sticks in your head. Give it a listen.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: No Future

VOX POP – The Band, The Myth, The Volume 12″

LA Satanic chic by 45 GRAVE's lesser shadow. "Become a Pagan"? is a fast, haunting chant with spooky vocals that would provide an excellent soundtrack for pagan ritual dancing. The rest are slower dirges better suited to luded-out covens.

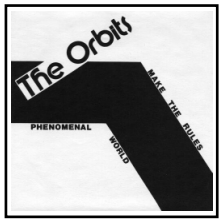
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Unlisted

WHOOM–ELEMENTS – Of Love / Men in Politics 7″

This female trio from Austin plays melodic, harmonic music. But underneath that soft exterior are fine poets who say the obvious but not so obvious. "Men in Politics"? is a gem.

Reviewer: Ruth Schwartz
Label: ESR

THE ORBITS – Make the Rules / Phenomenal World 7″



If you long for those great Irish punky pop groups like the UNDERTONES, RUDI, and the MOONDOGS, you'll love this one. In addition, this Wisconsin bunch is that rarest of birds—a political pop band ("Make the Rules"?). A minor classic in a currently neglected sub-genre.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: No. 1 Records

THE PARTISANS – 17 Years of Hell EP

It's got those UK punk choruses OK. Straight-ahead delivery, but not as supercharged as their first release.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: No Future

THE REVIEW – England's Glory / Greatest Show on Earth 7″

A mod-punk hybrid which is kind of catchy but too wimpy to have much impact. At least it's different.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: All the Madmen

THE ZIPPERS – I'm In Love 12″

The ZIPPERS return with a whimper rather than a bang, as might have been expected. This is undistinguished pop-rock without the faintest glimmer of originality. Ray Manzarek ought to be ashamed of his sickly production.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Rhino

TOTAL CHAOS – There Are No Russians in Afghanistan EP

An oddball release from a new funnypunk group featuring brilliant satire ("No Russians"?) and a snarling song *sans* guitars and bass ("Revolution #10"?). Atypical and recommended for that reason.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Slam!

TRANSISTORS – Riot Squad EP

A strong debut for this group. Real fast standard punk throughout, none too original, but better than most.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Open Circuit

V/A – Flex Your Head LP

A strong release of exceptional historical interest, but one that's a bit erratic and not always up to the standards set by Dischord's awesome 7″ catalog. This record includes outtakes from all the core bands, as well as a sample of material by defunct bands like the UNTOUCHABLES and new outfits like those on side 2. The thrash material ranges from good to great (MINOR THREAT, YOUTH BRIGADE) and the experimental punk of RED C and VOID is noteworthy for its power and originality. Oi clones IRON CROSS are a bad joke and the grooves are too compressed to yield maximum power, but these are minor gripes about a hot compilation.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Dischord

V/A – Not So Quiet on the Western Front 2xLP

We're in no position to be objective about this one, since we compiled it. All we'll say is that it features 47 Northern California and Nevada bands (a few known elsewhere, most not), and ranges from hardcore to garage. All cuts previously unreleased. Comes with 48-page zine on the bands.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Unlisted

DIRT – Object Refuse Reject Abuse EP

A great record that sounds *exactly* like CRASS at their vitriolic best. I'd swear it was CRASS if I didn't know better, but I am convinced that CRASS have mastered the cloning process. Seriously, this is intelligent raw noise with a militaristic beat, so march out and buy it.

Reviewer: Anonymous
Label: Crass Records

DISCHARGE – Hear Nothing See Nothing Say Nothing LP

Doom with a very fast beat. Don't say that these guys didn't warn us if someone drops the big one, because this is the second LP (they also have four 7″ers) that hammers away without mercy at the potential hell of nuclear holocaust. The songs here tend to be a bit similar (repetitive riffs and some heavy metal guitar), but the delivery is so powerful, the words so convincingly committed, that it's a winner. Much like watching a huge fire—horrifying, but riveting at the same time.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Clay

DISCHORDS – Dirty Habits EP

What an anomaly! An English clone punk group from California. Even if the singer is English, and he'd better be with an accent like that, there's no excuse for the other members aping their Britpunk counterparts when they're from a state known for superior hardcore bands. "Truth Comes Out"? and "When You're Young"? work pretty well due to their speed, but the others aren't worth talking about.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Reckless

DISEASE – No Future / I Know How 7″

With a name like DISEASE and a song title like "No Future,"? this record has to be punk, right? Wrong, it's weak post-punk with squeaky-clean guitars. This is about as wimpy as ORANGE JUICE, so someone ought to sue them for false advertising.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Disease Discs

DISORDER – Distortion to Deafness EP

A *bona fide* classic, manic thrash punk of the most intense kind. This EP demonstrates that DISORDER is the very best punk group in the UK and the only one that can even approach Yank outfits like MINOR THREAT and the FARTZ in terms of sheer power. If you get only one English record from 1981, this should be it.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Disorder Records

DREDD FOOLE AND THE DIN – So Tough / Sanctuary 7″

A remarkably distinctive record, combining the best elements of the VELVET UNDERGROUND, LOVE, and the LEGENDARY STARDUST COWBOY. With these raunchy points of reference, this can only be described as "psycho-delic."? Wow!
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Religious

EFFIGIES – Body Bag / Security 7″

I normally hate heavy metal punk, but the EFFIGIES do it so well that categories become meaningless. "Bodybag"? is appealingly straightforward while "Security"? has a dance-oriented beat with layers of metallic guitar and an occasional dubbed vocal. The production here doesn't compare with their earlier EP, but they do include some hilariously uninformed literature about punk rock by right-wing (U.S. Labor Party) and left-wing (Progressive Labor) retards.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Ruthless

ERAZERHEAD – Shell Shock / She Can Dance 7″

RAMONES clones who sound more like the LURKERS except for some obvious vocal touches. Even so, these are the type of good poppy tunes that "da brudders"? don't seem capable of producing these days. I guess that's a recommendation.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Flicknife

FLIPPER – Album — Generic Flipper LP

The hype surrounding FLIPPER has already reached nauseating proportions, and I have no intention of adding to it. If you're downed out, you'll like their abrasive slow numbers and if you're straight-edge, you'll probably prefer the fast abrasive tracks ("Living for the Depression,"? "Nothing"?) that they seldom do these days. FLIPPER was much better back when this album was recorded, *before* they started taking themselves too seriously. After all, any joke—no matter how effective—ceases to be amusing if it's told too often.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Subterranean

FUCK–UPS – FU82 EP

Mediocre '77-style punk, including one song ("White Boy"?) about a dumb white guy trying to be as ignorant as some dumb low-rider types. Unfortunately, it's not a satire, as singer Bob Noxious constantly finds new ways to act out his insecurities and aggression in public. Ignore.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Fowl

GBH – No Survivors EP

GBH are real fast and real powerful, but for some reason I'm not wild about them. Their songs just are not that distinctive and I have a nagging feeling that they're all form and no content. Even so, "No Survivors"? is one of their best efforts to date.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Clay

GET SMART! – Words Move EP

Lightweight post-punk with sparse guitar and "modern"? vocals. There are some interesting arrangements and hooks here, but they could use a heavier, more abrasive backing.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Syntax Music

HEADCLEANERS – Disinfection EP

Manic thrash punk with gravelly Oi singing. With its speed and intensity, this is probably the best record yet from Sweden. They thank BLACK FLAG, the DEAD KENNEDYS, DISORDER, and Dischord Records on their info sheet, which should give you some idea of their influences.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Malign Massacre

HEART ATTACK – God Is Dead EP

A strong debut by a young New York band, "God Is Dead"? is the first thrash punk song from the Big Apple, unless you consider the BAD BRAINS a New York outfit. The other songs are fast but more traditional stylistically.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Damaged Goods

HÜSKER DÜ – In a Free Land EP

This band is one of the hottest, most awesome bands to ever walk onto a stage. They are not to be missed. Their first single was weak, and their LP was hard to make out, but this new single comes closest to capturing their raw, grating, high-speed velocity. Great!

Reviewer: Ruth Schwartz
Label: New Alliance

INFA–RIOT – The Winner / School's Out 7″

By no means special, but a vast improvement over their first heavy metal-punk release. Increased speed is the differentiating factor rather than improved songwriting.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Secret

THE EXPLOITED – Attack / Alternative 7″

The new release by the UK version of the PLASMATICS may contain the best song they've ever written ("Alternative"?), with its snappy hook-laden chorus, raw power, and—perhaps strangest of all—intelligent lyrics. Unfortunately, the flip exemplifies their usual mediocre standards.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Secret

THE EXPLOITED – Troops of Tomorrow LP

Lots of really fast HC stuff here, but you can't tell what they're singing about—no lyrics sheet. But maybe it's better this way. I'm afraid to know what these "geniuses"? are saying. Cover says it all.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Secret

THE FARTZ – Because This Fuckin' World Stinks... EP

My favorite release of 1981, and that's saying a lot given the quality of the competition. The FARTZ thrash so hard and fast that they leave most hardcore bands behind in a cloud of dust, but they still manage to exercise a lot of brainpower. This EP is as intelligent, frenetic, and intense as any you're likely to hear, so get it now before it's out of print.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Fartz Records

THE GONADS – Pure Punk for Row People EP

Very clever and *very* funny, but all too typical from a music standpoint. Except for the thrashed-out "Got Any Wrigley's John?"?, it's the humor that makes this one stand out. (Not the award-winning title: "I Lost My Love to a UK Sub."?)

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Secret

THE INSANE – El Salvador EP

Disappointing. The sound is certainly heavy enough, but it's too slow to keep up with their first thrash EP. Thematically sound but musically average, and I could do without another version of the HEARTBREAKERS' "Chinese Rocks."?

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: No Future

THE LORDS OF THE NEW CHURCH – New Church / Livin on Livin 7″

A bunch of losers from the DAMNED, DEAD BOYS, and SHAM 69 band together and prove they're not has-beens. This is a really original record featuring irresistible hooks, tasteful psychedelic guitar work and enough snottiness in the vocals to hold down the pretension. A pleasant surprise.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Illegal

THE MISUNDERSTOOD – Before the Dream Faded LP

An extremely talented '60s band from Riverside, CA that eventually immigrated to England to seek fame, fortune, and appreciation. This album, which contains some valuable unreleased material, showcases their evolution from a raw blues band with punk overtones (side 2) to a powerful, guitar-oriented group with Asian influences in the YARDBIRDS' vein. Innovative records like this don't age with the passage of time.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Cherry Red

THE NEOS – End All Discrimination EP

Possibly the fastest thrash garage punk ever recorded. So fast that the music cannot be structurally confined and sometimes degenerates into total noise. Some might think it's too fast, but I really like the NEOS' combination of aural chaos and political conscience.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Alandhiscar

SPECIAL DUTIES – Police State EP

The third 7″ from one of my favorite Oi bands. Though their amazingly gruff vocals and speedy tempo again lift them above the usual fare, none of these tracks is as irresistibly catchy as "Violent Society."?

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Rondelet

SUBHUMANS – Reason for Existence EP

"Big City"? is a really outstanding cut, fast and with a '77-style chorus. The rest is generic English punk rock.

Reviewer: Anonymous
Label: Spiderleg

TSOL – Weathered Statues EP

A huge disappointment. This is so lame it's hard to believe TSOL put out one of the best punk EPs of 1981. "Man & Machine"? is alright punk, "Statues"? is embarrassingly wimpy and pretentious, and the others sound like substandard out-takes from the LP.
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Unlisted

TEENAGE POPEYE – Modern Problems EP

"Life Is Cheap"? is cool garage punk with hilarious lyrics, and "Expectations"? is punky enough to be OK. The rest is basic rock of the most boring type.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Alien Nation

THE BUSINESS – Smash the Disco's EP

Generic Oi with a five-year-old theme and a banal sound. Too little, too late.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Secret

THE CHESTERFIELD KINGS – Hey Little Bird / I Can Only Give You Everything 7″

Greg Prevost and company again comes through with great '60s punk from the '80s. The "monaural"? sound and snot-nosed vocals give this 45 an amazingly authentic feel, so much so that I'm actually reminiscing. But *you* don't have to have been a teenage asshole in 1966 to enjoy it today—it'll still drive your neighbors crazy.

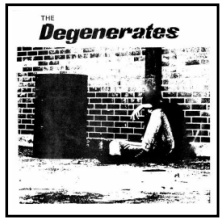
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Living Eye

THE CHILD MOLESTERS – Wir Lieben Die Jugendlich Mädchen 12″

Cover your ears, the CHILD MOLESTERS have been resurrected! The band that brought you "I'm the Hillside Strangler"? is back, at least on vinyl. This material, originally recorded in 1978, is like the movie *Plan 9 From Outer Space*—it has enormous appeal precisely because it's so awful. With titles like "I'm Gonna Punch You in the Face"? and the most amateur musicianship imaginable, I've got to recommend it.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Ace & Duce

THE DEGENERATES – Fallout EP



'77-style punk from Texas. It's real good in a vaguely nostalgic way, with lyrics ranging from intelligent ("Fallout"?) to stupid ("Scrungy Girl"?). "Radio Anarchy"? is a particularly catchy track with slightly muddled sentiments.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Hit & Run

THE EXPELLED – No Life No Future EP

I would have thought it premature, but here's a band that's inspired by VICE SQUAD. Even though "What Justice"? is super fast and catchy, one VICE SQUAD is enough, thank you.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Riot City

INSTANT AGONY – Think of England EP

Your basic English punk here—steady beat, drone guitar, political protest lyrics. B-side "Working Class"? is catchy. Good-looking sleeve, but best part is the name of the label.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label:
Half Man Half Biscuit

JFA – Blatant Localism EP

Phoenix skateboarders thrash out and come up with an EP full of classy teenage punk anthems. The guitar could be more grating, but the songs are fast, catchy, and pretty damn funny ("Beach Blanket Bong-Out"?). Check it out today, and skate your troubles away.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Placebo

LEWD – American Wino LP

First release from them in two years. Side 1 presents the better aspects of the current line-up: more thrash out songs with good social commentary lyrics. A pleasant surprise. Side 2, on the other hand, is a live recording, and is more typically heavy-handed and nihilistic. At least most of the good songs are all on one side.

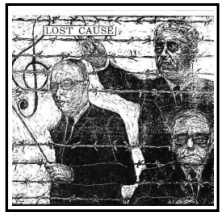
Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: ICI Sanoblast

LOS REACTORS – Be a Zombie / Laboratory Baby 7″

Like their first 7″, this is garage pop from the deep Midwest. I'd classify it as garage punk if the guitar overwhelmed the Farfisa-type organ, but it doesn't so I won't. Pretty good in an unremarkable way, and the critical anti-conformist lyrics to "Zombie"? prove that these Okies aren't from Muskogee.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Cynykyl

LOST CAUSE – Born Dead EP



Superior thrash punk from SoCal with a roaring sound and more punch than most in a genre known for hitting power. Need I say more? Highly recommended.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: High Velocity

MDC – Millions of Dead Cops LP

MDC, formerly the Texas STAINS, are one of the most politically-aware punk bands around today, and this record has enough food for thought to gorge the average listener with ideas. The music is exceptionally fast but much more complex than the typical thrash attack, a combination that can be disorienting until the material becomes more familiar. My one complaint is that the mix emphasizes the vocals at the expense of the guitars, but this is still one of the year's best albums.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: R Radical

MEATMEN – Blood Sausage EP

Garage punk at its finest. Only someone as smart as *Touch and Go* fanzine editor Tesco Vee could be responsible for something this trashy. With its gritty sound and themes like infanticide, repressed sexuality, and Beatlephobia, this EP is guaranteed to offend anyone with a speck of decency, so buy two and send one to the moral puritan of your choice. Me, I'm sending a copy to Senator Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina).

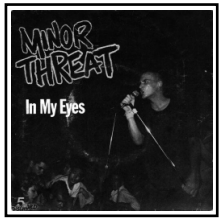
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Touch and Go

MENCENARIES – Mercenaries for Hire EP

Medium-tempo SF punk with anti-war lyrics (I think), a few experimental touches (especially on "Mercs for Hire"?), and a guitar that could use a helluva lot more distortion. The main problem here is the lack of any discernible passion.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: self-released

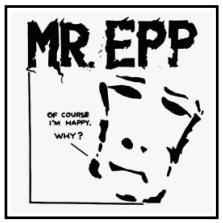
MINOR THREAT – In My Eyes EP



Awesome thrash punk from DC. This band has the kind of power and commitment that most groups only dream about. Not only does this blast right off the turntable, but the songs really stand out. One of the two or three best releases of 1981, no doubt about it.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Dischord / Limp

MR. EPP AND THE CALCULATIONS – Of Course I'm Happy, Why? EP



Weirdly-structured guitar raunch crammed with cynicism. Some of the cuts are fast ("Red Brigade"?) and some are slower with herky-jerky rhythms, but all of them stimulate thought. The vicious critique of fashion-clone punks ("Mohawk Man"?) is alone worth the price.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Pravda

OCTOBER DAYS – West Coast / Don't Give Yourself Away 7″

A really cool debut. "West Coast"? is a satirical look at the California punk phenomenon which parodies the ADOLESCENTS' "Kids of the Black Hole."? The flip is more strong mid-tempo punk with a short bridge that reminds me of the TURTLES! Recommended.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Clutch

OUTLETS – Best Friends / Bright Lights 7″

Power pop with *real* power. Loud, jangling guitars and exceptional catchiness make "Friends"? one of the best examples of this style in a long time. The flip is more mundane, but the OUTLETS are getting better with each release.
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Modern Method

OVENMEN – Collector's Edition EP

Fast synth/drum-machine music with politicized lyrics, sort of like punk without guitars. Interesting, but not for the narrow-minded.

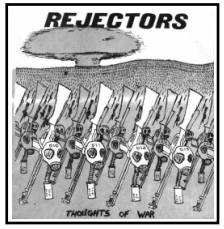
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Oven Hot

PETER AND THE TEST TUBE BABIES – Banned from the Pubs EP

Great funnypunk with a powerful sound and Oi vocals. This is the kind of record that it's uproariously fun to sing along with, especially if you're drunk.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: No Future

REJECTORS – Thoughts of War EP



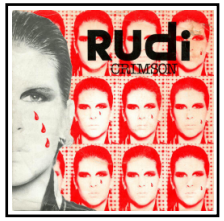
Wild thrash punk in the FARTZ tradition, minus the distinctive songwriting. For some reason, only "Fight Establishment"? and "Go Die"? really stick in my head later, probably because of their strong choruses. Still, this EP is raw as hell and has great lyrics.
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Fartz Records

RIOT/CLONE – There's No Government Like No Government EP

A new political punk group whose music isn't yet wild enough to shake you up, though "Death to Humanity"? comes close. "Bottled Oi"? is notable for its ironic feel and its vicious critique of Oi mindlessness.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Riot/Clone Records

RUDI – Crimson / 14 Steps 7″



Depressing. Once a great guitar-heavy pop band, RUDI has now resorted to sickening keyboards. Just because the UNDERTONES added strings doesn't mean that it's OK for other Irish groups to get wimpy. Shoot the synth player.

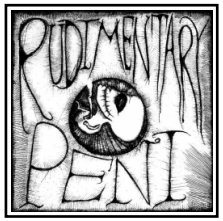
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Jamming!

RUDIMENTARY PENI – Farce EP

A better-recorded 11-song follow-up to their first release, but loses speed and rawness in the process. A bit more post-punk influence here, and a bit more repetitive, but still strong.

Reviewer: Tim Yohannan
Label: Crass Records

RUDIMENTARY PENI – Media Person EP



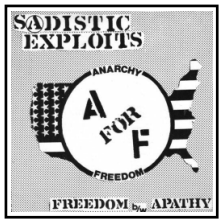
One of the truly magnificent records of 1981, which inexplicably received almost no media attention. 12 thrash garage tunes (a new subgenre) like the best of the MEAT PUPPETS, but with political themes. It's really too great for words, so get it if you can find it.

Reviewer: Anonymous
Label: Outer Himalayan

SS DECONTROL – The Kids Will Have Their Say LP

Boston is happening! SS DECONTROL fired the shots heard 'round the world and generated a thriving hardcore scene. This great album shows why, with its ferocious thrash assault, committed delivery, and intelligent radical lyrics. Fan the flames!
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Xclaim! / Dischord

SADISTIC EXPLOITS – Freedom / Apathy 7″



A thinking person's punk 45 from Philly. Two politically sophisticated songs, one a thrasher ("Apathy"?), and the other slow and measured with a focus on the half-spoken, half-sung vocals. Recommended.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Freedom

SAVAGE CIRCLE – Kill Yourself EP

Short snatches of New York thrash with heavy echo on the vocals. Not particularly original, thematically ("Hardcore Rules"?) or musically, but such efforts still deserve support.

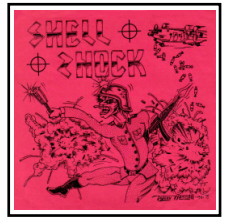
Reviewer: Anonymous
Label:
Savage Circle Records

SEDITIONARIES – Wherewolf / Shapes 7″

"Wherewolf"? is yet another entry in the SoCal shock-horror-punk sweepstakes. It's pretty good if you like that genre, and I guess it was inevitable that LA punk would branch out somewhat. "Shap
is a pedestrian punk cover of the old YARDBIRDS' classic.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Rabid

SHELL SHOCK – Your Way EP



A strong new release from the only real underground label in New Orleans. This EP offers '77-type punk with a bite. Worth your attention.

Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Vinyl Solution

SOLIDARITY – Disarm / Deny 7″

A ska-ish band from So-Cal. I was prepared to hate this, but it's not all bad. "Disarm"? is fairly straight ska, but "Destiny"? is an engaging ska-punk fusion with a super fuzz guitar. Progressive lyrics provide a further bonus, so check it out.
Reviewer: Jeff Bale
Label: Solid